

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman Sam Farr (D-Carmel) this week introduced legislation that would establish a competitive grant program to promote domestic regional tourism.

"We can't turn around without hearing someone talk about the need for job creation, and we all know how important tourism is to the Central Coast," said **Rep. Farr, co-chair of the Congressional Travel and Tourism Caucus**

, made up of more than 100 Members of Congress. "The travel and tourism industry is one of the top industries in every single congressional district across the country, and it has the potential to be one of the largest vehicles for job creation as our economy continues to recover."

The Travel Regional Investment Partnership Act, or the TRIP Act, directs the Secretary of Commerce to create a grant program designed to promote domestic regional tourism growth and new domestic tourism market creation. The bill (H.R. 4676) authorizes \$10 million in competitive grants, to range between \$100,000 and \$1 million each, to accomplish those goals.

"We know how important the travel and tourism industry is to our economy," **Rep. Farr said**. "It supports more than 8 million jobs and accounts for four times the rate of GDP than the automotive industry. But in 2009 alone, we saw a decrease of \$130 billion in the industry. This bill is a serious job-builder, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to get it passed."

"Investment in tourism will help our economy recover and I fully support this legislative initiative," said **Caroline Beteta, president and CEO of the California Travel and Tourism Commission and national chair of U.S. Travel Association**. "Tourism offers employment across a variety of economic sectors, from hospitality to retail, restaurants and attractions to rental cars and other transportation businesses. These are jobs that cannot be outsourced to other countries and directly impact local economies."

The grant program will apply to convention and visitors bureaus as well as partnerships between state or local governments and local tourism entities. Groups will be required to provide matching funds for the projects.

"Congressman Farr's proposal for a Travel Regional Investment Act is an innovative approach to strengthen the public private partnership and encourage investment in one of America's top industries, tourism," said **Maggie Ivy, CEO of the Santa Cruz County Conference and Visitors Council**. "In Santa Cruz County alone, tourism generates over \$600 million in consumer spending annually. We see this bill as a mechanism and opportunity to support small businesses, employment and the health of our local tax base."

Bob Cowdrey, interim CEO of the Monterey County Convention and Visitors Bureau, added: "As the second largest industry in Monterey County, we must protect and grow the tourism industry that creates 22,700 jobs, provides \$46 million in tax revenues and generates \$2 billion in spending. Travel means jobs, economic recovery and growth. One of every eight U.S. jobs is created directly or indirectly by travel and tourism."

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